

Respectfully Submitted by Wendy Whitehair-Lochner

1. *Why are you seeking a position on the Board of Education? List your experiences that are relevant to the position.*

I am seeking a position on the Jefferson County School Board because the field of education has been a calling and my life's work. I truly feel that all my experiences over the last 40 years have led to this moment and decision, where I have a broad perspective and experience base that allows me to contribute in a positive way to the JC School Board. Those experiences include having been a teacher in Jefferson County in general education and special education, School Improvement Coordinator for the WV Department of Education, national educational consultant and adjunct professor at Shepherd University in the department of education and teacher preparation. The breadth of those experiences has been invaluable, and I have and continue to work with school districts throughout the US to make them great. It is only natural that I want JCS to be the best it can be.

2. *List and explain briefly the top three goals/issues you feel the BOE should address.*

The top three issues I have selected are infrastructure, staff training and support, including pay raises and community relationships.

Jefferson County has some aging schools that no longer provide an appropriate place to educate students. As a current interim board member, I have supported and voted to put in the new bond the new construction of Shepherdstown Elementary and Ranson Elementary Schools. Additionally, we have other schools that have needed repairs and maintenance. Jefferson County Schools has positioned itself nicely with the purchase of the land for the new schools and it is time to get them built.

Secondly, staff training and support is something that I have spent my lifetime focused on and have seen that when the staff receive appropriate training and support, they rise to new levels. This is so true in what we have currently seen with their heroic efforts during the pandemic. All JCS employees have been given obstacles that no one could have anticipated. More importantly, our staff need to have a voice in what is needed and they should be recognized and compensated for their dedication to continuing to grow as professionals ensuring that all students receive the best education possible to set them on the path that is right for them. I am huge supporter of those providing the services need to be more involved in the decision making and look forward to inspiring committees and task forces that have those voices help lead JCS. Furthermore, we must recognize that education from this point forward has changed. We truly need to be an agile and nimble system as we move forward over the next 18 months. Our teachers will be provided a great

Wendy - Whitehair - Lochner

deal of training and continued professional learning opportunities. They, in return, must contribute their continued ingenuity and innovativeness.

Thirdly, I need to speak about community relationships. Schools are a major cog of a community. It is imperative that this board work with schools, staff and community to improve those relationships. This happens through dialogue that can sometimes be difficult but must be heard and supported by this school board.

3. *The JCEA is comprised of both professional and service personnel. How do you view your role/relationship with the JCEA in improving the educational system of Jefferson County?*

I wholeheartedly understand that a school is system in not just the teacher. It takes everyone to provide a quality educational experience for our students. Having been a coach my entire life, nothing speaks truer than we win as a team and we lose as a team. It takes everyone involved and being their best self for our school system to be great. I know first-hand having been a special needs teacher, that I could not do my job without the dedication of all the support staff. From the bus driver who knew what to do if my students were having a meltdown, to the instructional aides that knew each student like they were their own child, to the janitor that cleaned up accidents that sometimes occurred and the lunch ladies that took the time to speak and motivate students as they passed through the lunch line. It takes everyone and every person in a school system is necessary and must be valued. I know and have stood beside all that give every day to educate our students.

4. *How do you plan to foster transparency and support the BOE, School employees and the community?*

Transparency has been an issue in my opinion. As a board member I am open to discussions, live or virtual forums to discuss neighborhood topics and how our school system is meeting the goals of the community. I think the Board must get to a place where the community trusts them again and this is going to take time and transparency of the decision making. Our Superintendent needs to be forthcoming with information and this needs to be communicated to the community. Currently, the Board has a public relations person and they have been providing a great deal of information to students, families and the community, but I feel it needs to go beyond just giving information. It needs to be public information. Being a partner in the communities is the best way to provide for the current and future needs of our students.

5. *List/explain the top three budgetary goals/issues that should be addressed to plan and execute closing the revenue gaps in future JCS budgets.*

JCS has revenue streams that are being hampered. As an interim member I have started to get to know more about the finances of JCS. Currently we obtain funds from school formula based on enrollment, impact fees and money from the casino. Jefferson County's student enrollment continues to be on the decrease meaning we

Wendy Whitehair- Lochner

are losing money not getting more money from the formula. Since the opening of MD casinos, the revenue has dropped from 8M to 1.5 M a significant lose of funds. These all make the budget much more concerning. My top three budgetary goals are:

1. Continuing to be fiscally responsible. JCS has paid off WHS and purchased land for new schools. These types of good decision making need to continue.
2. Building new schools is difficult because while they are needed the SBA only provides funding for the building itself. JCS must pay for playgrounds, parking lots, and everything else that goes into the school.
3. Use of contracted staff and external supports for our students with special needs. This consumes a great deal of our budget and we have to figure out a better way to meet the needs of these students that is less costly to JCS.

6. *How do you plan to ensure transparency between the Superintendent/Central Office Staff and School Employees?*

The Superintendent/Central Office staff all should have open door policies. I will work to ensure that all school staff are comfortable and understand their communication with the Superintendent or CO staff when necessary needs to be a priority. It's miscommunication that often creates difficulties and could be curtailed through more productive communication and transparency. Just in the past few weeks prior to COVID I had asked that our public relations put out a briefing to all JCS employees as an update about what's happening. This is the beginning of that transparency. I know that before I came on the Board, I made many assumptions. These updates provide a broader view of some the issues surrounding JCS. When these are communicated to the staff this allows for that greater communication that is necessary.

7. *In recent years there has been an increase in students suffering from both emotional and physical trauma. The efforts to meet the needs of these students have overshadowed the needs of the overall school population. Teachers are regularly forced to stop instruction and enact safety protocols which negatively impact a positive learning environment in the classroom. How will you as a board member support a school environment that focuses on the needs of the many as well as the needs of a few?*

As an interim board member, I have supported and voted on the funding necessary to develop a Social-Emotional team that allows social workers to be in every school and provide staff to support students that are suffering from mental health issues and emotional or physical trauma. Teachers will receive training on social-emotional lessons for students and as team we will provide a learning environment that strives to meet the needs of social-emotionally challenged learners. This is critical to the education of our students and I will continue to support the